

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding this time to me. I strongly identify with his comments, and it is a pleasure for me to share a few moments this afternoon with my colleagues, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. Bereuter) and the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. Kolbe), who so ably led our delegation in the recent CODEL dealing with some of the economic problems of Southeast Asia. I have forever, I think, seared in my mind more than any of the other stops along the way during our visit in that troubled region, the visions of what happened in Indonesia. It has been already mentioned on the floor of this Chamber that this is a huge country. It is the fourth most populous in the world. It has the largest Muslim population. It is spread out over 15,000 islands, most of which are inhabited, but two statistics loom large in my mind:

One is that of this vast population, over half are now at or below the Indonesian poverty level and that in this context they have moved forward to move from three political parties to over 140, and in three short months they are going to attempt without any real election infrastructure to administer their first democratic election in over 40 years.

It is a country that is troubled on several levels. The gentleman from California (Mr. Lantos) mentioned the tragedy of East Timor, where over 200,000 people have been killed in senseless violence in the last 25 years. There is also another violence that is occurring in this vast archipelago where we have a violence against the environment, where driven by economic imperatives and poor infrastructure they are exploiting the forests, the coral reefs, the endangered species and the fishing stock. If we are not active in this region, there will be environmental damage that will have impacts throughout Southeast Asia and the world for years to come.

I strongly commend to this Chamber adoption of the resolution and our being forthright as to why these elections are so critical. Over 125,000 polling places are going to be staffed. We need to give our support for this effort.

Second and implicit here, and I hope that we find ways to make it explicit on the floor of this House and with our own personal involvement, is the American pressure to deal with these forces of transition as they try and correct their economy, as they try and have a military that makes a transition to a civil society and dealing with these environmental and ethnic issues that have been mentioned. There is an opportunity for Members of this Congress to be active both in the observation of the election process and making sure that we step forward with the appropriate aid for this giant country. I cannot conceive of any place in the world where our time and our money will be better spent, will have more impact than in Indonesia.

Mr. Speaker, for most Americans Indonesia is sort of the country that was the background for the movie, 'Year of Living Dangerously'. They have maybe some vague recollection of what has happened in East Timor. They may have some sense of this being the former colony of the Dutch East Indies.

We must, on this floor, find ways to make this image more real and more impactful, because we cannot afford to avoid making our responsibilities known as we help them deal with the change to which they are being subjected.